

'THIN' MISSILE NET BACKED IN INQUIRY

Defense Aides Say It Should
Prevent U.S. Casualties

By JOHN W. FINNEY

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The Defense Department told Congress today that the "light" anti-missile system recently ordered by the Administration should prevent any casualties if Communist China launched a missile attack.

The system, known as Sentinel, also should provide a limited defense against an orbital bomb being developed by the Soviet Union, the officials said.

But they told a Congressional subcommittee that the Administration was not planning to deploy an extensive defense against the orbital bomb, which, they contended, presented no immediate military threat.

This assessment of the capabilities of the Sentinel system was presented by Deputy Defense Secretary Paul H. Nitze and Dr. John H. Foster Jr., director of Defense Research and Engineering. They appeared before the Military Applications Subcommittee of the Joint Congressional Atomic Energy Committee as it began extensive hearings on the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) issue.

2 Points of Contention

From the Administration's standpoint, the hearings began on a surprisingly friendly note. The Administration had been looking to the subcommittee as the main point of Congressional pressure to go beyond an anti-Chinese missile defense system, costing \$5-billion, to a much more elaborate anti-Soviet system, costing \$40-billion. Instead, the Administration found its basic arguments going unchallenged and Senator Henry M. Jackson, Democrat of Washington, the subcommittee chairman, commending the testimony of the Defense officials as "reassuring."

Only two points of contention emerged. One was whether the Soviet Union had violated the recently implemented outer space treaty with development of an orbital bombing system. The other was whether the Soviet Union was seeking to overcome the nuclear superiority of the United States.

Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara disclosed last Friday in test firings over the last year the Soviet Union has been developing a system to deliver a nuclear warhead from orbit. The system has been called the Fractional Orbital Bombardment System (FOBS) because the weapon apparently is not intended to make a full orbit before it releases its warhead at the intended target.

Senator Jackson charged that the Soviet Union's development of an orbital bomb was a "good-faith violation" of the outer space treaty. The clear intent of the treaty, he maintained, was to prevent deployment of "a terror weapon in space."

No Violation Seen

Mr. Nitze said there was no violation because the treaty only precluded the stationing of nuclear weapons in orbit and did not prevent the deployment of such orbital weapons. In this contention he was supported by Senator Albert Gore, Democrat of Tennessee, who as a member of the United States delegation to the United Nations was involved in the preliminary drafting of the treaty.

In an opening statement, Representative Craig Hosmer of California, the ranking Republican on the committee, contended that with its recent increase in offensive missile strength, the Soviet Union was likely to achieve "nuclear parity" with the United States in the 1969-72 period. On the assumption that the Soviet missiles would carry larger warheads, Mr. Hosmer warned that the Soviet Union might then be able to destroy the United States' retaliatory force in a surprise attack, thus eliminating this country's nuclear deterrent.

In one off the few heated moments of the hearing, Mr. Nitze retorted that "it does not help to make denigrating statements about our nuclear posture which are not true." In terms of "target kill capability," the Defense officials said, it is the Administration's intention to maintain a "clear superiority" over the Soviet Union. Senator Jackson had expressed concern that the Administration was shifting from a strategy to "nuclear superiority" to one of "nuclear parity" with the Soviet Union.

Mr. Hosmer was the only committee member openly to advocate deployment of an ABM system against the Soviet Union. The fact that such a suggestion came from the Republican side undoubtedly contributed to the obvious reluctance of the committee to take open issue with the Administration's decision to deploy a "thin" system against Communist China.

Mr. Nitze and Dr. Foster reiterated, without challenge from the committee, the Administration's basic argument that it was technically "infeasible" to build an effective missile defense system against the Soviet Union, because the system could be overwhelmed by more or better offensive weapons. But against a small and relatively unsophisticated attack, such as Communist China would be capable of launching in the 1970's, it is possible, Dr. Foster said, to build a "very effective defense."